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From Ideas to Action

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From Ideas to Action

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and

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This project would not have been possible without the willingness of all 24 of the essayists to offer their personal experience, professional expertise and transformative ideas to create a dynamic vision and concrete strategies to advance racial equity in Richmond. To all of the essayists, thank you for your contribution to thought leadership in our region. These essays have much to teach us about the racial inequities that plague our lives and our city, but also about how we might dismantle racism and reimagine a new future.

Racial equity is both an outcome and a process. As an outcome, racial equity is realized when race no longer determines one's ability to thrive and be successful. As a process, racial equity is the practice of meaningfully involving marginalized people in the decisions that impact their lives. The overarching themes gleaned from this collection and categorized below can help inform our actions and processes and influence outcomes towards a more racially equitable future. I hope readers reflect on these themes and strategies, perfect them, and put them into action.

Personal Transformation

Advancing racial equity requires a change in personal perspective, and we see that theme throughout many of the essays. Michael reminds us of the important values, such as respect for elders and love of our neighbor that should be the basis for our community engagement and decision making. Lea, Bekah, Damon and Meghan, encourage us to shift the way we relate to those who are most impacted by inequities, recognizing their value, expertise and creating space for those who are most marginalized to step into power. Oscar lets us know that we need to intentionally create space for relational and cultural connection across differences. Angela prompts us to change how we view Black girls, to value their lives and contributions, and to invest in their futures. Dennis invokes white people to work with other white people to address the white backlash that undermines racial equity. Ram gives us Massive Resilience as a tool to heal Black people and communities through arts, culture, education and health. And finally, Ashley prompts us to rethink our approach to mass incarceration for violent offences and tells us to move our anti-racist work from our brain to our body to begin to heal our racial trauma.

Institutional Change

The essays make clear that whether business, non-profit or government organizations, changing the policies and practices that create barriers to prosperity for people of color is a must. Lea and Bekah encourage the non-profit sector to change the way they engage communities of color by centering their experience and expertise. They challenge us to fundraise differently and fund Black led non-profits sufficiently. Brian encourages the business community to adopt more equitable practices and remove barriers to Black and brown entrepreneurs. Shanteny makes it clear that greater representation, cultural appreciation and power distribution for Latinos needs to take place, while Gabriella advocates for empathy, empowerment and linguistically and culturally accessible services for the Latino community.

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Reallocating Resources

Creating a more just and equitable world will require intentional reallocation of resources and investment into the lives and communities that have been deprived. Ebony believes investing in Black and brown communities that promote property ownership and entrepreneurship is key. Shekinah gives us Brown Circles as a framework for Black collective financial liberation while Taikein, Genevieve and Ben point us towards transforming the way we approach and fund education. Maritza advocates investing in public infrastructure that reconnects our city and establishing programs that increase generational wealth. Ryan, Jeremy, Danny, Wyatt and Faith clearly communicate that we need to target our health, climate, greenspace and transportation resources and interventions where they are needed most (using data) and to the historically marginalized first.

Changing Policy

History has taught us that policy plays a significant role in creating and perpetuating systemic racism. Heather and Mariah remind us that it was housing policy that helped segregate our communities. Thus, we need to enact new policies and allocate new resources to make sure we have affordable rental and homeownership options available in every neighborhood, such as inclusionary zoning and property tax relief. Likewise, Martiza proposes rewriting the zoning ordinance as a way to facilitate more housing options. We also need policies that provide greater access and alternatives to our existing systems. Tanya exhorts local governments in the region to adopt a comprehensive immigration integration policy that centers language access services. Ashley points us to models like Common Justice than enable alternatives to incarceration.

Multi-Sector Collective Action

Finally, the essays communicate that it will take our collective vision and action to move toward an equitable future for our city. Actions include building awareness of various issues, catalyzing strategies like those presented in this collection, and supporting the work of both grassroots and advocacy organizations to influence political action. To do this, we need a comprehensive, multi-sector, intergenerational, intersectional approach to our anti-racist work, which links people, communities, and strategies across policy arenas.

The work ahead of us is hard, but the time is now. We hope these ideas create conversations and collaborations that lead to innovation and change for Richmond, and perhaps create new models for advancing racial equity in our nation.